United Nations A/C.2/61/SR.31

General Assembly
Sixty-first session

Official Records

Distr.: General
14 December 2006

Original: English

Second Committee

Summary record of the 31st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 22 November 2006, at 3.30 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Intelmann ..... (Estonia)

Contents

Agenda item 42: Report of the Economic and Social Council

Agenda item 51: Macroeconomic policy questions (*continued*)

(b) International financial system and development (*continued*)

Agenda item 53: Sustainable development (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (*continued*)

(c) International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (*continued*)

Agenda item 59: Training and research (*continued*)

(b) United Nations Institute for Training and Research (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

06-62639 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.40 p.m.

Agenda item 42: Report of the Economic and Social Council (A/C.2/61/L.46)

Draft resolution on the proclamation of international years

1. **Mr. Bialek** (Australia), speaking also on behalf of Canada and Finland, introduced draft resolution A/C.2/61/L.46. It addressed an important issue which had arisen during negotiations on the draft resolution on the international year of natural fibres (A/C.2/61/L.2) but which it had been decided should be pursued in a separate, parallel resolution.

Agenda item 51: Macroeconomic policy questions (*continued*)

(b) International financial system and development (*continued*) (A/C.2/61/L.3 and L.41)

Draft resolutions on the international financial system and development

2. **The Chairperson** introduced draft resolution A/C.2/61/L.41, which was being submitted by Ms. Gomes (Portugal), Rapporteur of the Committee, on the basis of informal consultations held on draft resolution A/C.2/61/L.3. The draft resolution had no programme budget implications.

3. **Ms. Gomes** (Portugal), Rapporteur, expressed appreciation to the facilitator for the efforts made to achieve consensus.

4. *Draft resolution A/C.2/61/L.41 was adopted.*

5. *Draft resolution A/C.2/61/L.3 was withdrawn.*

Agenda item 53: Sustainable development (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (*continued*) (A/C.2/61/L.23/Rev.1)

Draft resolution on the oil slick on Lebanese shores

6. **The Chairperson** introduced draft resolution A/C.2/61/L.23/Rev.1, which was being submitted by South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The draft resolution had no programme budget implications.

7. **Ms. Zia** (South Africa) said that in the fifth preambular paragraph, the word "donor" should be deleted before the word "Conference". She also announced that Cyprus, France, Greece and Spain had joined in sponsoring the draft resolution. Lastly, she informed the Committee that errors had been discovered in the Spanish and Arabic versions of the draft resolution. She reserved the right to bring those errors to the attention of the Secretariat.

8. **The Chairperson** informed the Committee that a recorded vote had been requested on draft resolution A/C.2/61/L.23/Rev.1, as orally revised.

9. **Mr. Mally** (United States of America), speaking in explanation of vote before the voting, said that his delegation wished to express its condolences to the people of Lebanon for the tragic loss of the Industry Minister Mr. Pierre Gemayel. The United States supported the Lebanese people's desire to live in peace. However, it could not support the draft resolution, which used one-sided and unbalanced language and placed demands on one party to the conflict while failing to acknowledge the role of those responsible for initiating the hostilities in Lebanon in the summer of 2006. It was Hizbollah that had provoked the conflict with its incursion into Israel on 12 July. That fact was not acknowledged in the draft resolution.

10. The United States regretted the pollution of the shores of Lebanon resulting from the destruction of oil storage tanks in the vicinity of the Lebanese El-Jiyeh electric power plant. However, the Committee had important responsibilities and should not be used to advance one-sided and unbalanced views. In particular, it was inappropriate for the Committee to take a position on Israel's responsibilities to compensate Lebanon for damage caused during the course of an armed conflict.

11. **Mr. Fluss** (Israel) said that the draft resolution was a blatant attempt to politicize an issue of environmental concern and paint Israel, once again, as the unjust aggressor. It joined the litany of one-sided resolutions that flowed out of the General Assembly each year. The Committee must not allow politicization to infiltrate its work, as it distracted attention from issues of substance and relevance.

12. The draft resolution omitted a crucial detail relating to the context of the events described. It did not mention the entire reason for the conflict — namely, that on 12 July 2006 Hizbollah terrorists had

crossed an internationally recognized border into Israel and kidnapped and killed Israeli soldiers. Had the Government of Lebanon exercised its sovereignty and fulfilled the conditions demanded of it by Security Council resolution 1559 (2004), the conflict would not have occurred. But the Government of Lebanon had been derelict in its duty and irresponsibly allowed the growth of a "state within a State", and now the peoples and land of Lebanon and Israel were paying the price.

13. In response to Hizbollah's attack, Israel had done what any other country would have done: defend and protect the lives of its citizens and eliminate the impending threat. As 4,000 Katyusha rockets had rained down on Israeli towns and citizens, it had been Israel's moral duty to defend its people. The obligation of a responsible Government was first and foremost to its citizenry. The same could not be said for the Government of Lebanon, which had ignored its people and its land and allowed terrorists to hijack both.

14. That was not to say that there was no reason for concern regarding the environmental health and vitality of Lebanon's coast. Professional agencies — including United Nations bodies such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) — were assessing and addressing the situation on the ground, in ways that would accomplish far more than the draft resolution. Moreover, if the sponsors were earnest in their desire to address the development ramifications of the conflict, they would have mentioned the more than half a million trees and 52,000 dunams of forest that had burnt down in Israel as a result of fires caused by Hizbollah rockets; the 25 Israeli cement and asbestos buildings that had been damaged, polluting an area of 20,000 square metres; or the direct hit by a Katyusha rocket on a sludge-thickening plant in Tzafat. The omission of reference to those environmental catastrophes in Israel proved that the draft resolution was an act of political demonization.

15. Israel urged those Member States that believed in authentically addressing the challenges and responsibilities of the Committee to distance themselves from yet another act of partisan politicking. That was not the way to deal responsibly with matters requiring genuine attention.

16. *A recorded vote was taken on draft resolution A/C.2/61/L.23/Rev.1, as orally revised.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Australia, Canada, Israel, Palau, United States of America.

Abstaining:

El Salvador.

17. *Draft resolution A/C.2/61/L.23/Rev.1, as orally revised, was adopted by 138 votes to 5, with 1 abstention.**

18. **Mr. Bowman** (Canada), speaking in explanation of vote after the voting, said that his delegation was concerned at the serious impact of the oil spill on the Lebanese coastline and beyond. However, it had decided to vote against the draft resolution because the General Assembly was not the appropriate forum to address questions of legal liability or compensation for the cost of repairing environmental damage.

19. **Ms. Zia** (South Africa), making a general statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that, following negotiations with the European Union, the Group of 77 had agreed to remove the phrase "in accordance with international law" from paragraph three of the original draft resolution, although it would have preferred to retain a specific reference to international law.

20. **Mr. Saleh** (Lebanon) said that the destruction of oil storage tanks by the Israeli air force had caused immense damage to the Lebanese environment and economy, some of which was irreversible.

21. The destruction of the oil tanks near the El-Jiyeh power plant was a deliberate act committed in full knowledge of the harmful effects on the environment. The international community had an obligation to remind Israel that the environment was not a legitimate target and that such acts would not be tolerated. Since international and customary international law prohibited pollution of the environment, Israel was legally bound to refrain from actions that could cause environmental harm.

22. **Mr. Suárez Salvia** (Argentina) said that the Spanish-speaking delegations were holding consultations to decide how to accurately reflect the title in Spanish.

(c) International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (*continued*) (A/C.2/61/L.26 and L.45)

Draft resolutions on international cooperation to reduce the impact of the El Niño phenomenon

23. **The Chairperson** introduced draft resolution A/C.2/61/L.45, which was being submitted by Mr. Fonseca (Brazil), Vice-Chairperson of the Committee, on the basis of informal consultations held on draft resolution A/C.2/61/L.26. The draft resolution had no programme budget implications.

24. **Mr. Fonseca** (Brazil), Vice-Chairperson, said that the draft resolution duly reflected the agreement reached during the informal consultations. He expressed his appreciation to the facilitator and the delegations who had participated in the negotiations.

25. *Draft resolution A/C.2/61/L.45 was adopted.*

26. *Draft resolution A/C.2/61/L.26 was withdrawn.*

Agenda item 59: Training and research (*continued*)

(b) United Nations Institute for Training and Research (*continued*) (A/C.2/61/L.38*)

Draft decision on the United Nations Institute for Training and Research

27. **The Chairperson** introduced draft decision A/C.2/61/L.38*, which was being submitted by Ms. Zia (South Africa) on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The draft decision had no programme budget implications.

28. **Mr. Atiyanto** (Indonesia) expressed his appreciation to the facilitator and the participating delegations for their efforts in reaching a compromise on the text. He hoped that the draft decision would be adopted by consensus.

29. *Draft decision A/C.2/61/L.38* was adopted.*

The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.

* The delegation of Belarus subsequently informed the Committee that it had intended to vote in favour of the draft resolution.